Project I.D. No. 181

NAME: Ouye, Mitsugi DATE OF BIRTH: 1897 PLACE OF BIRTH: Hiroshima
Age: 80 Sex: F Marital Status: W Education: 10 yrs.

PRE-WAR:
Date of arrival in U.S.: 1917 Age: 20 M.S. M Port of entry: San Fran.
Occupation/s: 1. Farmer's wife 2. Vegetable store 3. _____
Place of residence: 1. Woodbridge 2. Lodi 3. Acampo
Religious affiliation: Buddhist church
Community organizations/activities: _____

EVACUATION:
Name of assembly center: Stockton
Name of relocation center: Rohwer, Arkansas
Dispensation of property: Left at neighbor's Names of bank/s: _____
Jobs held in camp: 1. Kitchen helper 2. _____
Jobs held outside of camp: _____
Left camp to go to: Lodi

POST-WAR:
Date returned to West Coast: Sept. '45
Address/es: 1. Lodi 2. _____
3. _____
Religious affiliation: Buddhist church
Activities: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: Husband died in 1974.

Name of interviewer: Takarabe Date: 10/24/77 Place: Lodi
Translator Mabel Hall

Q: Please tell me your name first?

A: My name is Mitsugi Ouye.

Q: Where is your native town?

A: It is Hiroshima Prefecture.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born in the 30th year of Meiji. (1897)
I am 80 years old now.

Q: What kind of a woman was your mother?

A: She was a farmer's daughter.

Q: Was she a gentle woman?

A: Yes, she was.

Q: How about your father?

A: I was the oldest daughter. There were 2 sisters and 3 brothers, but my father loved me the most. They are still alive.

Q: Are all of them still alive?

A: Yes, they are. My father loved me the most. I don't remember being scolded by my father. I remember my younger brothers and sisters being scolded for doing something naughty.

Q: Was your father a farmer?

A: Yes, everybody was a farmer.

Q: Did he farm in a large scale?

A: He was a middle sized farmer.

Q: About how many tans (about .245 acres) did he have?

A: I think he had nearly 1 cho which is about 2 acres in America.

Q: What do you remember about your father and mother?

A: When I was little my father used to pick me up from school if I was late. I used to walk about 2½ miles to school, so when I was late my father used to pick me up from school as I had to walk around the edge of a hill. As I was the oldest, my father used to make me do everything. He didn't have much education, so he made me write letters or write names on gifts. I also helped with farming. Since I was little my father taught me things and made me work. The night before my 20th birthday I got married.

Q: How much schooling did you have?

A: I had 8 years of grammar school and 2 years of continution school. Altogether I had about 10 years of schooling.

Q: Do you remember about your grammar school days?

A: Until the 4th grade there were not many subjects, but after the 5th grade geography and history were added.

Q: Did you like schools?

A: I liked schools the most. I wanted to go to a highschool, but as the farming was busy I had to help my parents, so I could not go. I barely finished junior highschool. In the meantime the continuation school was opened, so I went there for 2 years and learned sewing. In my days most people quit school after 4 years of grammar school. Only those who wanted to become teachers or somebody went to higher schools, but ordinary farmers did not send their children to schools.

Q: What do you remember about your schooldays? Were there excursions?

A: Yes, we had excursions and athletic meets. Sometimes we had literary exercises.

Q: Did you participate in anything?

A: I participated in literary exercises all the time. I did some reading, demonstrated math, told stories or sang songs. I was very little. I am still little, but I was smaller when I was a child. The teachers loved me and let me do all kinds of things.

Q: How did you play when you were in grammar school?

A: We bounced balls and played a game of jintori.(a game to take the enemy's camp)

Q: Was your house near the sea?

A: No, it was about 7½ miles from the sea.

Q: You couldn't go fishing then?

A: No, I did not go fishing.

Q: How the the girls usually play in those days?

A: We played with dolls and handballs.

Q: What else do you remember about your schooldays?

A: I don't remember anything special.

Q: Were there any riots in the village?

A: No, nothing like that happened.
My saddest memory was that a teacher who taught me for many years left as she was transfered to another school. The day before she left I stayed with her till evening without going home. She was transfered to a normal school which was a promotion for her. Her name was Mori, a famous Samurai line. Her parents died so she was teaching school to support her grandmother, a brother and a sister.

Q: Was that teacher a man?

A: A woman teacher. I did not want to part with her so I stayed with her till evening. When I was walking home late in the evening I met my father who was coming to pick me up worring about me.

On one Empire's Day (Feb. 11) we had to set up the hall for a ceremony, but leaving the work to men, about 3 girls visited and talked with the teacher. She was glad to see us, but she scolded us for being lazy and not working.

At one time I had measle on the day of the athletic meet. I did not like to be absent from school, so I went to the athletic meet in spite of the fever. In the midst of the meet I fainted. I used to make my parents worry.

Until I was 4th grade the school was near by, but after I became 5th grade I had to walk about 2½ mile. There were no cars then like today.

Q: Did you walk to school alone or with your friends?

A: I walked to school with 2 or 3 friends.

Q: Was there a hill near your house?

A: Yes.

Q: Were there any fruits?

A: There were no fruits.

Q: Weren't there any nuts?

A: There were chestnuts, persimons, plums and citrons.

Q: What do you remember about your mother?

A: My mother did not like to go out in public as she thought she was too old. She did not want to work in the field as she was ashamed for being old, so after I became older than 25 I worked for her. Actually she was only about 50, but she said she was old. My father died at the age of 61.

Q: Was your father a strict man?

A: Yes, he was quite strict, but she never scolded me.

Q: Did your brothers and sisters all go to school?

A: Yes, they went till 8th grade.

Q: Your father must have been a big farmer to send all the children to school.

A: He had about 2 acres, and he worked hard.

Q: What did he grow?

A: In those days rice and wheat were the main crops, and he grew enough vegetables for us to eat. We sold just rice which was left over after we set aside as our staple food, and used it to pay the tax. We did not go out and work, so farming was hard. Those who did not have land worked away from home.

Q: What did you do after you graduated from grammar school?

A: I went to grammar school for 8 years, I could have gone to a girls' highschool after the 6th grade. There was a girls' highschool in Hiroshima City. I went to the continuation school. My friends who had time went to girls' highschool.

Q: What do you remember about the junior highschool?

A: We had athletic meets, literary exercises and exhibitions in which we exhibited our handicrafts. We had excursions about once a year. In those days we walked to everywhere so we could not go too far. We went to Kure, the Naval port, and Itsukushima, one of the three most picturesque places in Japan. When we walked to Itsukushima my feet were hurting.

Q: What did you do after you graduated from the junior highschool?

A: I stayed home and helped my parents and practised sewing.

Q: How old were you when you graduated from junior highschool?

A: I was 15 years old.

Q: Did you stay home for 5 years after that?

A: Yes, I helped my parents at home for 5 years. In the meantime I learned sewing and etiquette which a girl should know.

Q: On your marriage, how was your husband picked?

A: My husband was a far relation of mine. I heard that he came to America when I was 7 years old. He married once, but his wife died about a year later. At that time I was still a child.

Q: Was that in Hiroshima?

A: He was in America, and he sent for a picture bride but she died. A few years later he went back to Japan to see his parents. At that time his parents advised him that he should be married before he went back to Japan. He married me and we came here in 1917. That was 60 years ago.

Q: Then your husband was back in Japan when he married you, wasn't he?

A: Yes, he went back to Japan and got married.

Q: Did you have an interview with your prospective husband?

A: We did not have an interview as we lived near by, although I never met him before.

Q: Did you want to get married?

A: I was thinking about coming to America, so as I could come to America, and as he was a far relation I decided to get married without any worry. My husband was much older than I was.

Q: How much older than you was he?

A: He was 16 years older.

Q: Then he was 36, wasn't he?

A: Yes, he was. I was only 20 and did not know anything about America. But as I said I wanted to go to America, I was told that there was a man who was back from America, so he would ask this man.

Q: Who said that? Was it your father?

A: My husband's uncle said that. He was married to my aunt. I heard they told my husband to marry me.

Q: Did you meet him before you got married?

A: I met him a short while before we got married.

Q: You have met him before, haven't you?

A: No. We lived close by but he left home when I was a child.

Q: Did you see him when he was back from America?

A: Yes. On my way to a sewing class one day I met him on the road. I was told that he was the man who came back from America.

Q: At that time you were not engaged, weren't you?

A: No, we weren't.

Q: When your marriage was arranged, what kind of a person did you think he was?

A: I didn't think anything special about him. I agreed to marry him as he was a far relation and as he was going to America. Nowadays people associate with each other for a while before they get married, but in olden days some people got married without seeing each other when their parents or go-between arranged their marriage.

Q: Didn't you have an interview before marriage?

A: No, we didn't.

Q: Was your marriage all arranged?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: What kind of a place did you think America was then?

A: I didn't have any idea what kind of a place America was.

Q: You wanted to go to America, didn't you?

A: Yes, I did. I wnated to go without knowing what kind of a place it was.

Q: What kind of marriage ceremony did you have?

A: An old fashioned Japanese wedding.

Q: How does it go?

A: We hold it at home. We invite relatives and friends and matchmakers. We exchange 3 nupital cups 3 times.

Q: Who conducts the ceremony?

A: The matchmaker does. He drinks out from the nupital cup and gives it to the groom who gives it to the bride. The ceremony takes a long time if we do it formally. Usually we simplify it. As we were coming to America, we invited our relations and friends to the wedding.

Q: Did you go on a honeymoon after the wedding?

A: No, we didn't. We stayed there for a month after the wedding as we had to make arrangements for the passage,

Q: Where did you live after you got married?

A: We stayed at my husband's house.

Q: How was the life at your husband's house?

A: There was nothing special. His mother and brothers and sisters lived near my house and I knew them well, so I stayed there without reserve. We stayed there only while we made arrangements to come here. We had to go to government offices, so we were quite busy, but we helped the family a little. My husband had leased 10 acres for 3 years, and went back to Japan after the first crop. He went back to Japan in January, and came back to America in April of next year.

Ouye: My husband was good at calling pheasants by blowing a whistle. At one time my uncle called a pheasant and shot it but he missed it. Then my husband called it and tried to shoot it, but he shot his hand instead. He was hsopitalized for a month, but his hand was crippled. All his brothers were in the Army. He was the oldest, but he was not drafted because of his crippled hand. The Russo-Japanese War broke out the year he took a physical examination for draft. That year he went to Hawaii, and from there he came to America. The war broke out when he was going to Hawaii, so some men were called back to Japan from Hawaii. As he had a crippled hand he was exempted from military service.

T: I am surprised your parents let you go although you were the oldest daughter.

Q: My mother tried to stop me as she did not want to let me leave, but as I wanted to come to America, and since he was a relative others thought they didn't have to worry, and told me I could go. My mother was the one who did not want to let me go, but when I went back to Japan after 5 years, she was still well.

Q: Where did you go after you got your visa and passport?

A: We went to Yokohama. At that time the ships were crowded with picture brides and other passengers, I had no trouble passing the tests for eye diseases and hook worms, but as the ships were crowded we had to wait in Yokohama for about a month.

Q: About how many times did you miss the ships?

A: About 3 times.

Q: Did you stay at a hotel?

A: Yes, we did. It cost us much money to stay there for a month, but if we went home we would miss another ship, and we had to pay the trainfare, so we stayed there. At that time my uncle who was a doctor was in Tokyo for research, so we went to see him. In those days many people from Okinawa were going to Brazil as government contract immigrants, so we booked passage on a ship going to South America. It was an old ship, and it was very slow. They fed us rice boiled with barley so that we won't get beriberi. We were on board the ship for 18 days before we arrived at San Francisco.

Q: What was the name of the ship?

A: It was Seiyo Maru.

Q: What do you remember about the voyage?

A: There wasn't anything special. We did the same thing everyday.

Q: Did you look on the ocean?

A: Yes, I looked on the ocean. The passengers were all young people from Okinawa so they were clothed differently. Their kimonos were made of nice material, but the style was like that of Japanese grammar school children; short kimono with short sleeves and obi tied in front.

Q: Did you talk to them?

A: No, I couldn't, because they spoke different dialect. It seemed that they went to school to learn standard Japanese, but they talked in their dialect. The ships crew were angry, and told them to use the standard Japanese.

Q: Were there many brides?

A: There were young couples.

Q: Were there women, too?

A: Yes, they wore short kimonos with short sleeves and obi tied in front.

Q: Were they going as brides?

A: Yes, they were. There were some who were accompanied by husbands.

Q: Did anything interesting happen on board the ship?

A: Nothing interesting happened.

Q: Was there a storm?

A: No, there wasn't.

Q: Did you stop over in Hawaii?

A: No, we didn't. The ship did not dock in the harbor as they were afraid some government immigrants might jump off the ship. It was anchored about one mile off shore, and only some people could go shore by a barge. They did not let everybody go ashore. Some Hawaiians brought some bananas to the ship to sell. My husband bought a bunch as they were cheap, but they did not get ripen before we arrived at San Francisco, so we ate only one and left the rest on the ship.

Q: Did you go to Angel Island after you arrived at San Francisco?

A: Yes, we did.

Q: Where did you go first after the ship came into San Francisco Bay?

A: Angel Island.

Q: What did you do there?

A: They examined us for eye disease and hook worms. After we passed the examination they took us back to San Francisco by a boat, and we went to the hotel.

Q: How long did you stay on Angel Island?

A: We passed the examinations, so we could leave right away. People who had eye disease or hook worms had to stay on Angel Island until they got rid of them.

Q: Did you land at San Francisco right after that?

A: Yes, we did. We stayed overnight at a hotel, and went to our camp by train.

Q: Where was your camp ?

A: It was at Woodbridge, near Lodi. We stopped at Asahi Hotel, and then took a taxi from there to the camp.

Q: When you landed at San Francisco what kind of a country did you think America was?

A: It was hard to tag along with my husband, so I was not thinking anything else.

Q: Why was it hard?

A: I never wore shoes in Japan, and the shoes he gave me were too little.

Q: Did you buy them here?

A: No, my husband had an old pair of shoes his former wife had.

Q: Did he take them with him?

A: He took them with him. He probably had them in the bottom of his trunk. I could not say anything so I wore them. San Francisco has many slopes and the streets were hard. My husband had been living here for over 10 years, so he walked fast, but I had to wear small shoes and tag along with him, so it was very hard.

Q: Were you wearing a kimono or a Western clothes?

A: I had a suit, made while we were waiting at Yokohama for a long time. Tailors came to take orders, so I had a suit made. I wore it when I landed here, but I found out that it was old-fashioned. When I visited a friend of ours who had a barber shop, his wife said, "Don't wear such a suit. It is old fashioned." So I bought some other clothes.

Q: Did you take a train from San Francisco?

A: Yes, we came to Lodi by a train.

Q: Did you stay there overnight?

A: We stopped at a friend's who managed a boarding house and had dinner there. Then a friend who was in taxi business brought us to the camp by a taxi.

Q: How did you feel when you arrived at the camp?

A: I was surprised it didn't look like a house.

Q: Why was that?

A: Unlike houses in Japan or over here, the camp was like a box made of boards with a roof on top and only one big room inside. Single men lived there, so they did not close the door unless they took baths. There were no beds, and there was no bedroom for us. There was a kitchen by the entrance. The only partition was between the kitchen and this room. There was nothing in the room. A single man who took care of the camp slept in one corner of the room. I wondered what to do, so I put a little partition in one corner and we slept there.

Q: Was it Mr. Ouye's camp?

A: Yes, he was renting it.

Q: How many people lived there?

A: Just two of us and a helper. At busy seasons we hired people.

Q: About how many people did you hire?

A: The year I came here there was much crops so we hired 30 people.

Q: Did 30 people sleep there?

A: No, they slep in tents. Some people who lived near by went home at night. They made partitions with 2 by 4s and put hay in them and covered them with canvas. Single men slept on them as mattresses. In busy seasons we slept in a tent outside.

Q: Were you surprised to have come to such a place?

A: Yes, I was. I wondered if America was such a place. In the meantime we made some profit, so we built a house, and made a packing shed in the back.

Q: What did you do the day after you came here?

A: I just cooked for three people in the camp. My husband went to town everyday to recruit some helpers as the plums were getting ripened. We needed about 30 helpers to pick the plums and pack them in boxes.

Q: What month did you come here?

A: I think we landed in San Francisco on April 25th.

Q: When does the harvest season of plums start?

A: It starts around the end of June.

Q: Then you had about 2 months to hire people, didn't you?

A: We had to hire helpers and had boxes made before then.

Q: Did you cook?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: How was the cooking?

A: I cooked rice Japanese style. I made miso soup and some side dish for breakfast. For lunch sometimes I served sashimi (raw fish) or meat cooked Western style. Nowadays most places serve American style breakfast with coffee and toast, but in those days we served cooked rice with miso soup. Only on Sundays we served Western style breakfast.

Q: Have you ever cooked for many people before?

A: No.

Q: Weren't you worried?

A: Yes, I was, but a friend's wife who cooked in previous years was working in the packing shed, so I asked her when I didn't know what to do. I had never made sashimi for 30 people, so I had the fish ready, and asked her to help me slice the fish.

Q: What kind of fish did you use for sashimi?

A: In those days there were seabass, and in autumn to winter there were yellowtails. There were plenty of fish. A fish peddler came to sell fish twice a week.

Q: Do you remember the name of the fish peddler?

A: He was a white man. In those days there were no Japanese fish peddlers.

Q: Have you ever made mistakes in cooking for so many people?

A: Yes, I did once.

Q: What did you do?

A: The rice got stuck in the bottom of the pot.

Q: Everybody make burnt rice, don't they?

A: But if it is burnt too much, it smells bad.

Q: Did people complain?

A: Yes, men in those days complained much. I was young and little. The farm hands were Issei men who had been working long. They complained that this and that were missing. They asked for catsup or butter which we do not use with Japanese food just to tease me.

Q: Did you cook for 30 people all by yourself?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Was there such a big pot?

A: There was a Japanese iron pot. Nowadays we have cooking range, but in those days there was a pit made of bricks, and we put one pot for cooking rice, a kettle for boiling water and a pot for cooking side dishes. There were 3 places to burn fire.

Q: Did you squat down to cook?

A: Yes, we squat down to burn brush under the pots. There was a hand pump outside the kitchen, so we pumped water in a bucket and carried it to the kitchen. Looking back, I wonder how I did it as there was nothing in those days. There was no ice box, but meat peddler and fish peddler came twice a week. There were 3 Japanese grocery stores which delivered groceries twice a week. I did not know how to drive, but I did not have to ask my husband to go out and buy food. They were all delivered.

Q: Was Rice and everything else delivered?

A: Yes, rice, miso, shoyu and everything were delivered.

Q: It was hard to make a plan, wasn't it?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: Did you make a plan every week?

A: Yes, I did. We were not growing vegetables then, so I had to buy vegetables, too.

Q: What did you have most trouble in cooking?

A: People criticising the taste of food was the biggest headache.

Q: What kind of thing did you cook for supper?

A: Rice and side dish of meat and vegetables, or sometimes fish.

Q: Did you serve sashimi for lunch?

A: Yes, I served it for lunch. We did not have an icebox so we had to eat the fish that day.

Q: Did you cook the fish, too?

A: Sometimes I cooked and sometimes I served it raw as sashimi.

Q: About what time did you get up in the morning?

A: I got up at 3:30 in the morning.

Q:What did you do then?

A: I cooked rice and miso soup for breakfast. Men went out to work at 7 O'clock. As the kitchen was small, not all 30 men could eat at one time, so I had to feed them in turn. That is why I had to start serving breakfast early.

Q: What time did you start serving breakfast?

A: I started serving early people around 5 o'clock.

Q: About what time did you stop serving breakfast?

A: Around 6 o'clock, and men went out to ranch by 7 o'clock.

Q: What did you do after that?

A: I cleaned up the kitchen. If I had a little time, I learned how to pack. After 10 o'clock I had to start preparing for lunch.

Q: Did you go out to work after you served lunch?

A: I helped packing before I started preparing supper. Then I had to pump water for the bath.

Q: Was it a Goemon bath?

A: It was a square wooden bath tub. I pumped the water from the well and put it in the tub by a pipe.

Q: Did you do that eveyday?

A: Yes, everyday. We had about 3 teams of horses. Nowadays there are trucks, but in those days we huled fruits we packed to a company in Lodi by a big wagon drawn by horses. We needed horses to haul fruits from the ranch to the packing shed, so we had many horses. I had to pump water for horses to drink.

Q: When did you wash clothes?

A: We washed clothes in wash tubs when we found time.

Q: Did you wash clothes in the daytime?

A: Yes, in the daytime. I stayed up till late at night. When I cleaned up after supper, and took a bath after 30 men bathed, it was around 11:30 to midnight before I could go to bed.

Q: You slept only about 4 hours, didn't you?

A: Yes, only about that much.

T: I am surprised you could do that.

A: Yes, I could do that because I was young then. I lived like that for a year. From the second year I knew what to do.

Q: How many years did your husband live in Lodi before he married you?

A: About 5 to 6 years. He started the enterprise in Lodi about 2 years before we got married. Before that he was leasing about 90 acres on an island in delta with a partner and was growing pear and asparagus. When he was 30 he sent for a bride, but she died about a year later. He quit the work there and came here and worked. Then he bought the right to lease land from a Japanese, and has been farming here ever since then.

Q: What was he growing then?

A: He was growing plum. His boss had 35 acres of grapes, so he took care of them. At grape season he worked as a foreman.

Q: What kind of a contract did he have then?

A: It was cash rent, so he could keep all if he paid the rent.

Q: About how much rent did he used to pay then?

A: I don't know how much the rent was, but he told me that he paid $350 to buy the right to lease the land. I don't know how much the rent for 10 acres was.

Q: Did he lease 10 acres?

A: He leased 10 acres, and he was a foreman of the grape ranch.

Q: Did you grow plums in 10 acres?

A: Yes, just plums.

Q: Did you pack them at your place?

A: Yes, we did.

Q: About how many years did you do that?

A: We grew plums for 3 years. After the lease was up we leased a grape ranch in Blackland and moved there. At that time our second son was born. We had 6 years' lease, but after we had harvested 3 crops, the landlord sold the land, so we went back to Japan. We stayed in Japan for a year and two months before we came back here.

Q: How was it when you went back to Japan?

A: Everybody was glad to see us.

Q: Didn't you work?

A: Yes, we worked. My husband family is a farmer. His brother who was taking care of the family was drafted into service, and there was nobody to farm, so we went back to Japan and grew rice for a year. We came back here the following year.

Q: Did you go back to Japan to live there permanently?

A: Yes, we thought we had to stay there permanently as there was nobody in the family except his mother. But he must have changed his mind because he decided to come back here. Anyway, his brother came home to take care of the family.

Q: At that time was your father and mother still well?

A: My mother was alive, but my father had passed away. He died a year before I went back.

Q: Did you want to go back to Japan when your father died?

A: At that time we were planning to go back to Japan. I had sent a letter home telling them that we were coming home, but he passed away before the letter got there. Had we gone back a month earlier I could have been in time, but we could not go back as it took long to finish harvesting the grapes.

Q: Did you become successful before you went back to Japan?

A: I cannot say we were successful, but we had some spending money. We had 4 children then. We had intention of going back to Japan so we left two children there to be educated in Japan.

Q: Did you leave the two oldest children?

A: No, the two in the middle. The oldest one is here.

Q: Did you come back to Lodi?

A: Yes, we did. We have been in Lodi since.

Q: What did Mr. Ouye start doing?

A: Farming again, growing grapes.

Q: About what year did you come back?

A: In 1924. We went back to Japan in January of 1923. I think it was around of May of 1924 that we came back here. It was after the war that we bought land and built our house. Until then we leased the land and moved around.

Q: What did you do right after you came back from Japan?

A: We bought crops of grapes and fruits. At that time we didn't have our own home so we went here and there.

Q: How long did you do that?

A: Not too long, about 5 years. As we had to send our children to school we thought we should not be moving around, so we leased 25 acres and started growing vegetables. We let our oldest son live in a temple in Stockton to learn Japanese language and to attend a white school. He left home when he was 7 years old, and lived in the temple.

Q: Did you have 4 children then?

A: Yes, I had 4 children, but 2 of them were in Japan, so we had the oldest and the youngest with us.

Q: Did your husband grow vegetables on 25 acres all by himself.

A: We had one helper who drove the horses. My husband had to deliver vegetables to stores in town, so we hired one man, and I helped. We did not make much money from growing vegetables, just enough to live on.

Q; How long did that continue?

A: Five years. Then we leased another place and grew tomatoe and strawberry.

Q: How was it during the Depression?

A: We were growing vegetables, but they did not sell well, and they were cheap. We took our vegetables to grocery stores and bartered for food, but those who grew grapes could not pay for grocery.

Q: Did you find it hard to make a living?

A: No, we didn't.

Q: Were there any Japanese around here who were badly off?

A: I don't know, but I think there were some.

Q: Do you remember anything else about the Depression?

A: We just worked.

Q: About what time did you get up when you were growing vegetables?

A: We got up around 4 o'clock. as we could not afford to hire many people during the Depression. I felt sorry for the laborers because they received only $1.50 working 10 hours a day. An old man who drove the horses had to get up around 5 o'clock, feed the horses, put the harnesses on the horses and eat breakfast so that he could start driving the horses by 7 o'clock. We paid him only $1.50 a day. My husband took a truckful of vegetables and brought home only about $8.50. He brought home some vegetables home ~~as~~ beause grocery stores did not buy them as they could not sell them. A sack of onion was sold for about 25¢. The sack itself cost 10¢, and we had to spend 3 to 4 months growing them, taking care of them and picking them. At the beginning of that year a sack of onion was about $5, but by the time the season came we could not sell them. As we had to plant something else on that land, we hired men to pick 3 acres of onion and threw them by the ditch. Then we heard that we could sell them for 25¢ a sack, so we put them back in sacks and sold them.

After the onion we planted lettuce. At first the price of lettuce was good, but we did not sell them as they were still young. In the morning of December 9th, the temperature dropped suddenly and all the lettuce were frozen. The frost did not melt for about a week, and by the time the lettuce were defrosted, they were no good, so we could not make money. Everybody in Lodi had their lettuce damaged. People came to buy lettuce for 25¢ a head, but we did not have any to sell. That was a bad year as we lost two crops in a row. Only carrots and green onion were saved after they were defrosted, but the rest of the vegetables were damaged after being frozen for a week.

Q: Was that during the Depression?

A: Yes, we had poor harvest during the Depression. It was hard to pay the rent of the land as we could not get money from the crop.

Q: Do you remember how much the rent was?

A: It was not too much.

Q: At that time were you growing lettuce, carrots and onion?

A: Yes, and some Japanese vegetables such as gobo(burdock), spinach and tomatoe. Tomatoes were already harvested by then. At that time we had 5 acres of grape ranch and 25 acres of vacant land where we grew hay for horses. We planted tomatoes by contract with a cannery.

Q: That was the time of prohibition, so it did not do any good to grow wine grape, didn't it?

A: No, it didn't.

Q: Could you get juice out of them?

A: We picked them, but I don't know what they were used for. Some people left the grape on the vine and then shook them down. We might have returned the lease of the grape ranch after about 3 years.

Q: What did you grow after vegetables?

A: We planted tomatoes and strawberry. Then we went to Acampo and grew strawberry ~~for~~ on about 5 acres. In the meantime the war broke out.

Q: Did your son and daughter come back from Japan before then?

A: We summoned them when we were growing vegetables. They came back in 1934.

Q: Did you summon them here as you thought the life was better here?

A: We did not have much money to take to Japan. We did not want to go back to Japan without much money. As the children were getting older, and ~~the lady~~ grandmother who was taking care of them were getting older, we decided to summon them here.

Q: After how many years did they come back?

A: After 10 years. Our son was 5 years old, and daughter wa
years old when we left them.

Q: How was it when your two children came home?

A: Some neighbors were worried that the children might not
us "otosan" (father) and "okasan" (mother), but as grandı
used to tell them that their parents were in America, and
she used to send us pictures of the children, they called
"otosan" and "okasan" and were attached to us
Grandmother used to take pictures of children every ye
and send them to us. We used to write letters to them, so
knew us. When we summoned them, our son said, "I am going
America." Then grandma said, "You are not going to Americ
You were born in America, and your parents are in America,
say that you are going back to America." That is why they
attached to us as soon as they came here.

Q: Was she your mother or Mr. Ouye's mother?

A: She was Ouye's mother. We left the children at Ouye's home.
my mother lived nearby they went back and forth everyday.

Q: What year was that?

A: They came back in 1934. We took them to Japan in 1923.

Q: Wha

A: We

Q: Did

A: We
cor

Q: Wh

A: I

Q: Ho

A: We
na
nc
to
Wh
we

Q: H

b

A: T

Q: D

A: E
h

Q: What did you do after you quit growing vegetables?

A: We leased land and grew tomatoe and strawberry for 5 years.

Q: Did you lease the land for 5 years?

A: We could lease as many years as we wanted if we signed a contract with the landlord.

Q: Why did you quit growing vegetables?

A: I think we quit it as we did not make much money.

Q: How was it after you started growing tomatoe and strawberry?

A: We did not make much profit, just enough to live on. Unfortunately the soil of the land in which we planted tomatoes was not good, so they did not,grow well. We had to send 4 children to school. Then we went to Acampo and planted strawberry there. When we started picking the first crop, the war broke out and we went to a camp.

Q: How was the attitude of the whites towards Japanese around Lodi before the war broke out?

A: There was nothing different before the war broke out.

Q: Did you have much chance to associate with any whites or the blacks?

A: Before the war our white landlord lived next door to us, and was very kind to us.

Q: When you moved to another place after the lease was up, did you take all your household goods with you?

A: Yes, we just moved to another house, but we had to take our farming tools and everything else with us.

Q: Was it hard to find a house in those days?

A: No, it was not too hard in those days. There were some people who wanted someone to take care of their ranch as they did not farm themselves.

Q: Were they the white people?

A: Yes, they were. Japanese who did not have citizenship could not lease land. Before the war our oldest son was over 20 years old. so he could lease the land. Before we grew strawberry we leased 20 acres of grape ranch.

Q: Who leased the land then?

A: Our oldest son did.

Q: What did you do before then?

A: Before he came of age we borrowed the rights of our friend's son and leased the land in his name.

Q: Did you send all kinds of things to your children while they were in Japan?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What kind of thing did you send to your children?

A: Mostly money.

Q: Did you send them any presents?

A: No, not much.

Q: Did you send them toys?

A: I did not send toys. My daughter still says, "I wanted American dolls, but mama didn't sent send me any." I was too busy to send presents. I wrote letters once in a while, and I sent them money little at a time. to help grandmother as farmers in Japan did not have much cash.

Q: When was your oldest son born?

A: In 1918. He is 59 years old now.

Q: When was your second child born?

A: She is the second one.

Q: What about the third one?

A: He was born in 1921.

Q: And the fourth one?

A: She was born in 1923 in Japan.

Q: Was she born when you went back to Japan?

A: Yes, she was. I went back to Japan whem I was about 3 months pregnant.

Q: Did you come back to America in 1924?

A: Yes, we did.

Q: Did picture brides come to America with you at that time?

A: Yes, they did.

Q: Were there many pieture brides around here?

A: Yes, there were quite a few.

Q: There were picture brides who had never met their husbands before. Were there many stories about them?

A: I think some of them got divorced.

Q: What do you remember about picture brides?

A: I did not have much chance to talk to them.

Q: Didn't you have much chance to talk with your friends before the war?

A: No, not much.

Q: Didn't you go to town?

A: Yes, just a little to learn sewing. My husband was farming in the country, and I stayed at a boarding house in town and learned sewing when it was not busy.

Q: Did you have children then?

A: Yes, my youngest one was 5 years old then.

Q: Didn't you go to town on Sundays?

A: No, not much. Husband went to town on business, but women did not go out for amusement. We went to town when Japanese movies were on as we did not understand western movies.

Q: Did Mr. Ouye like to drink sake ?

A: Yes, he did.

Q: Did he drink much?

A: No, not much.

Q: Did he drink enough to get drunk?

A: No, he didn't.

Q: Many Isseis got dunk, didn't they?

A: Yes, many got drunk and got in fights and got beaten up. My husband drank at home. He just drank light wine. Many people gambled, but he didn't. He just played cards with his friends.

Q: He was a serious man, wasn't he?

A: I think I can say that he was a serious man. As for recreation he went fishing or hunting when he had time. I never had to worry about him. If men drink too much they get in fights.

Q: Were there many Isseis who gambled around here?

A: Yes, there were, but not any more as Chinese are not around.

Q: There weren't any more after gambling was prohibited by law, weren't they?

A: That's right. I think Isseis gambled as there were no other amusements.

Q: Were there any picture brides around here who ran away because their husbands were too old or their lives were too hard?

A: I don't know of any such case. I heard that before I came here there were such cases.

Q: Were there many Japanese in Lodi before the war?

A: Yes, there were.

Q: Were there more Japanese than now?

A: I think there were more than now. Some people who were in Sacramento or Florin before moved here.

Q: Weren't there mnay single men when you came here?

A: Yes, there were many single men.

Q: What happened to them?

A: Some summonded brides from Japan, or some went back to Japan to take wives. Some stayed single until they died.

Q: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A: I was at Acampo. At that time we were growing strawberry. We were about to leave home to take care of the strawberry when we heard the news of Pearl Harbor attack on the radio and were very surprised. We kept growing strawberry for a while. It was before our oldest son went into service. He had graduated from highschool and was attending a school to be an airplane mechanic. He became a mechanic and got a job at an airfield in Sacramento, but Pearl Harbor was attacked so he was not allowed to get in the airfield as he was a Japanese descend . He came home, and then went to Utah to get a job. He waited for two weeks but they did not hire him as he was a Japanese descend. He came back to California and went to relocation center with us in May. From the center he was drafted.

Q: Were you surprised when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A: Yes, I was. People around here hated Japanese, so we could not go over 5 miles. Our neighbor who was our landlord was a very good man. He said that we did not start the war, the government did. He told us not to go out at night as there are many unreasonable people.

Q: Did you think danger will come to you?

A: No, I didn't think so.

Q; What happened after the confinement order came out?

A: After a while, around May 20 we were sent to the assembly center with some of our belongings. We could not take everything with us.

Q: What did you do with your belongings that you could not take with you?

A: We sold our new car which we had just bought real cheap as we could not take it with us. We did not know if we could come back or not as it was wartime. We left our old car in our landlord's garage. It was still there when we came back.

Q: Did you store anything in WRA warehouse?

A: No, we didn't. We left the kitchenware and other things there, and took only our belongings.

Q: Were you growing anything in the ranch then?

A: Strawberry had just ripened and had picked a little of the first crop, but we had to leave them.

Q: Didn't you regret it?

A: Yes, I regretted it. I think the white people who took over made money.

Q: Where did you go first?

A: We went to Stockton. They built a temporary camp where the race track used to be.

Q: Do you remember the name of the assembly center?

A: It was the Fairground.

Q: How long did you stay at the Fairground in Stockton?

A: From May to October. After that we went to Arkansas.

Q: How did you feel when you entered the assembly center?

A: I didn't feel especially sad.

Q: Was it inconvenient?

A: We had hashed potatoe for 3 meals a day, everyday. Young people cooked, and we lined up at the messhall to get served. We had everything put on one plate. Only coffee was separate. As many people were put in a small place, people became rough. We were worried what would become of us. We were old, but our children were at the age they might go astray. This daughter was married. The oldest son was over 20, the third son was 20 years old. There was not much work to do in the camp, so young people played majong. I was afraid they might go astray. In the meantime young Niseis were allowed to go out and work.

Q: Did you work in the camp in Stockton?

A: I helped the kitchen a little.

Q: What did Mr. Oyue do?

A: He also helped the kitchen washing pots.

Q: How was Arkansas? Was it Jerome or Rohwer?

A: It was Rohwer. It was cold in winter, and rained much in summer. Young ones went out of camp after we went there. The oldest son went to Chicago and worked at a restaurant. At first he worked at a garage, but the pay was little, and he had to pay for the food, so he worked at a restaurant, where he did not have to pay for the food. In the meantime he was drafted into service.

Q: What do you remember about Rohwer? Did you have fun there?

A: Our worries were gone as our children were taken care of. Our younger daughter got married in Rohwer, and our sons went into service, so just my husband and I had nothing much to worry about. There was no worry about food. The only unpleasant thing was that we were confined in such a place.

Q: Were there any poeple who did not approve of your sons going into service?

A: I heard that there were some people like that. Our sons said that as they were born in America and were brought up in America, they should become American soldiers and serve the country.

Q: What was the opinion of your husband?

A: He had the same opinion as our sons. There were some people who made speeches saying that Japan would win the war as she had never lost a war. At night time some people in each block made speeches saying Japan was winning the war. As many Isseis thought so, they went to listen to them. When my son came home on vacation he said that Japan was losing the war. I told him not to say such thing as Japanese in the camp were thinking that Japan was winning the war. Those who said that Japan would lose were beaten up.

Two of my husband's brothers were in Japanese Army, and one of them was a regimental commander. When we went to camp someone told us to say "no" when we were asked if any of our relations were in the Japanese Army. We said "no", and there was no investigation. When my son went into the Army, he found his uncle's name and rank and position in a book. The American government had investigated everything. Two of my husband's brothers volunteered for the Japanese Army and they were in the war until it was over. When I went back to Japan two years ago, one of my husband's brother told me that he was wounded in action, but as there was no medicine, the wound was infested with worms, and there was no food, so he had a hard time.

Q: Did you have any hobby in Rohwer?

A: I learned a little bit of flower making. I helped the kitchen.

Q: Didn't people at Rohwer do all kinds of things?

A: Yes, we did.

Q: What kind of thing did you do?

A: We had variety shows. Young men played baseball, judo and kendo (Japanese fencing).

Q: Did your husband go fishing?

A: He went once or twice. We could not go too far.

Q: What kind of a place was Rohwer?

A: It was built in the wood after cutting down trees. It was an undeveloped place on the hills. . After Japanese went there they cultivated the land and grew enough vegetables to eat. Vegetables grew real well there as the land was newly cultivated.

Q: Were there snakes and mosquitoes?

A: Yes, there were many. There were snakes in the hills. My husband went to the hills with his friends and brought back a rattler and showed it to everybody.

Q: Was it killed?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: What did he do with it?

A: Nothing .

Q: Didn't you eat it?

A: No, we didn't. I heard that you can make medicine out of it, but my husband didn't know anything so he just killed it.

Q: Did he go hunting there?

A: No, he could not go hunting as he was not allowed to have a rifle.

Q: What was his hobby?

A: Hunting and fishing were his hobbies, but he could not do them in the camp.

Q: Didn't he have any hobby in the camp?

A: He didn't do anything. At night he went to hear some speeches about Japan winning the war.

Q: Was anybody beaten up by radicals in Rohwer?

A: Only young men quarrelled sometimes, but I never heard of people beaten up by radicals. People who were for Japan were sent to Tule Lake. They went to Japan from there, but they came back to America. As our sons were in the service we did not want to go back to Japan. Some people went to Tule Lake to avoid their sons from getting drafted. After the war they came back to Lodi.

Q: Were there many people who sided with Japan in Lodi?

A: Yes, there were many. They went to Tule Lake, and came back here after the war. Some people went back to Japan.

Q: How did you like eating in messhall in camp? Did you like it as you did not have to cook?

A: Yes. Just when we were in Stockton they fed us only hashed potatoe. We were not used to the food, and everything was served on one plate. so it did not taste good.

Q: How did you like it that you didn't have to cook your meal? As a woman did you like it, or did you rather cook it yourself?

A: I did not give much thoughts about it. I helped cooking. Some people said they liked it as they didn't have to cook or work. We felt unpleasant as we were confined, but we did not have worried. Those who had sent their sons to battlefields were worried. Some were killed in action, and some came home wounded.

That daughter's younger brother attended a grammar school in Japan, and went to a white school after he came to America. As he could speak both languages he taught Japanese in Army language school. His big brother attened a Japanese language school when he was little, so he could speak Japanese also. He was sent to Japan as a member of the occupation forces and worked as an interpreter. As our sons were not in dangerous places we did not have to worry too much.

Q: How long did you stay in the camp?

A: Three years. We came home in September of 1945.

Q: Did you come straight home?

A: We came straight home from Arkansas to Lodi.

Q: How did you feel when the war ended and Japan lost?

A: Some people cried with disappointment. There was an old man in the camp who comforted himself saying, "Japan did not lose the war. She won the war."

Q: How did you feel?

A: My children had told me that Japan would lose the war. I thought Japan was foolish to have started a war with America after fighting with China for many years, and exhaused her strength. Japanese are strong in fighting, but when Americans put their feet down they are strong. America stopped making machinery and converted the factories to make weapons. As America has much resources they can do anything right away.

Q: How did you get to come home?

A: We were told by the office to come home after

Q: How did you feel when you found out that you could come home?

A: We were very happy. We came on an old train as new trains were being used for transfering soldiers and weapons.

Q: Did you come back to Lodi?

A: Yes, we came back to where we used to live. A little after we came home this daughter's younger brother got a contract with a company to pick several hundred acres of grapes.

Q: Was your son home before you?

A: No, he was not home, He was in the service. My son-in-law's younger brother didn't go into service. He came home and got a big contract from a company, so he hired about 150 Japanese who came back from the camps. As there was mot much housing, we put up many tents in a big lot by the packing shed. We cooked there during the picking and pruning season. After the grape season they went back on their own way. We stayed at a friend's home for about a month. After that we started farming at another place.

Q: Did you borrow the tents from the Army?

A: No, not from the Army. I think we borrowed from the company. Before my son-in-laws brother went to the camp he was working for that company. When he came back after 3 years he could go back to work there.

Q: Was he somebody like a foreman?

A; Yes, he was. He bought about 150 acres before the war, but sold it when he went to camp.

Q: Did he sell it before he went to camp?

A: Yes, he did. He had just bought the land, but he did not know how long he had to stay in camp, so he sold it. This daughter's husband started growing celery or something in delta district. by a contract with a company.

Q: How long did you stay in the tent?

A: About 3 months and cooked for men. After that job was done my husband became a foreman of a white ranch and worked there for about 5 years taking care of workers. After our son came home we bought land and a house in Acampo and stayed there for quite a long time. Then we exchanged the land near by and has been there for about 3 years now. For about 50 yeays we did not have a house of our own and moved around. As the war was over we decided to settle down here and bought land and a house. Before then we wanted to go back to Japan, so we did not settle down even if we had money.

Q: When did Mr. Ouye pass away?

A: About 3 years ago at the age of 92. He moved around in his long life doing all kinds of work.

Q: Do you recall of your past often?

A: No, not much as I am leading an easy life now.

Q: Looking back, when was the hardest time?

A: It was when we were growing vegetables because it was during the Depression. We had to send 4 children to school. We had to work from dawn to dusk, on rainy days or windy days. Fruits growers do not work on rainy days, but vegetable growers have to work on rainy days or windy days. We have to work hard although we do not make much money. Isseis worked hard, but as parents worked hard Niseis helped their parents while going to school.

Q: What do you want to teach Sanseis and Yonseis?

A: Whatever they do, I want them to do them conscientiously. They would say, "That is not fun to do." We do not do things because they are fun to do. I think they should do whatever they are supposed to do faithfully. It is hard to let young people do what Isseis did as the time has changed.

Q: What do you think is most important for Sanseis and Yonseis as they grow up?

A: I want them to respect their elders and follow their examples. Of course, not everything that elders did were good, but just follow the good examples and do their best in whatever they are supposed to do. Then I think they would be successful.

Q: Do you think it is good that Sanseis and Yonseis become aware of Japanese heritage?

A: Yes, I do. They do not discriminate whether Japanese or the whites. That is why they do intermarriages.

Q: Are you for or against the intermarriages?

A: I am not for or against intermarriages as the time has changed.

Q: What is your wish?

A: Most Isseis wish their children to marry Japanese. Looking back, we were discriminated, but now the white people are willing to marry Japanese. I think we should be thankful ~~from~~ on that respect. In olden days the whites did not treat Japanese equally, much less marry them. Now they give good positions to Japanese and marry Japanese. I think we should be thankful. Our oldest son is married to a white woman, but I did not oppose to the marriage. It is natural that old Japanese want their children to marry Japanese.

Q: What does your oldest son do?

A: He is an engineer of an aeronautic company in Los Angeles.

Q: Your second child?

A: She is the second daughter.The third one works for the city of Lodi.

Q:The fourth one?

A: She is married.

Q: Was your family religion Buddhism?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: Was it Shinsyu Sect?

A: Yes, it was Jodo Shinshu.

Q: Was your family devout Buddhists?

A: Yes, it was.